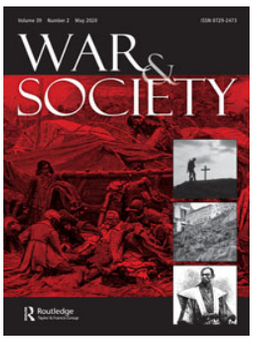

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Phan Chot's Choice: Agency and Motivation among the Kit Carson Scouts during the Vietnam War, 1966–1973

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Through a focus on agency and motivation, this article attempts to reach conclusions about the choices made by PLAF and PAVN defectors for continuing their lives as combatants in the employment of the United States Armed Forces as part of the Kit Carson Scout Program. Using predominantly fragmentary personal accounts found in divisional newspapers, this article concludes that Kit Carson Scouts joined for a variety of personal reasons that included the desire for better working conditions, the opportunity to support their family, the search for revenge, and political disillusionment. Additionally, the importance of the individual scout's choice is emphasised.

KEYWORDS Vietnam war, agency, motivation, Kit Carson Scouts, political identity, South Vietnam, defectors

Early in the morning of 16 March 1968, Phan Chot, a 37-year-old South Vietnamese farmer, left his home in Thuan Yen to prevent his capture by American forces.[1] Ever since Phan Chot had been forcibly conscripted into the 48th PLAF Local Force Battalion, he and two other men from the battalion left the hamlet every morning to avoid being captured by American forces. The men decided to hide at the base of a nearby hill and from this vantage point they could clearly see soldiers from C Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division being dropped by their helicopters in the village

[1] It has not been possible to include Vietnamese diacritical marks due to the nature of the source material which omits all diacritical marks. For consistency, I have chosen to follow the Westernised spelling of Vietnamese names and places as they are spelled in the source material.

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after an initial artillery bombardment. Phan Chot waited by the hill until 5.00 pm by which time the American forces had left. It was still bright outside and as Phan Chot returned to Thuan Yen, he began to realise that something terrible had happened. On the way to his home, he saw the dead bodies of two children. Inside his home, he found the dead body of his 17-year-old daughter. That night, Phan Chot buried approximately 100 bodies from a massacre that was to be known around the world as the My Lai massacre. A year later in the summer of 1969, Phan Chot made the choice to defect to the South Vietnamese government. In early 1970, Phan Chot told his story in a statement given to the investigation into the My Lai massacre through an American interpreter. He ended his statement by stating: 'I am a Kit Carson Scout (number 253, Chu Lai). I work for the Americans'.[2]

The Kit Carson Scouts was a group of former soldiers from North and South Vietnam who had defected from the armed wing (People's Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam, PLAF) of the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam (NLF) and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN, commonly known as the North Vietnamese Army, NVA) and who had, as part of the Kit Carson Scout Program, volunteered to work for American forces. The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (commonly known as the South Vietnamese Army, ARVN), the Republic of Korea Army, the Australian Army, and the Royal Thai Army all employed Kit Carson Scouts. Some scouts were organised under different names, such as the Bushmen Scouts in the Australian Army. This article will focus on the Kit Carson Scouts in the service of the United States Armed Forces. In their role as Kit Carson Scouts, the soldiers were responsible for finding and identifying their former comrades in arms, protecting American soldiers in the field from booby traps and potential ambushes, and serving as interpreters and interrogators.[3] For some American soldiers, the contact with the scouts in their unit was the only personal connection that they had with a South or North Vietnamese individual and through which they learned about the impact of the war on the society of South and North Vietnam.[4] The case of the Kit Carson Scouts is unique. Unlike the Army of the Republic of Vietnam or the South Vietnamese Regional and Popular Forces, the Kit Carson Scouts were employed directly by the United States and were integrated into American units. The scouts wore American uniforms, were armed with American weapons, were taught English, and were instructed in American tactics

[2] Unsworn Statement of Phan Chot, taken by LTC Billy M. Stanberry at American Division Headquarters in Chu Lai, RVN on 3 January 1970 in Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations Into the My Lai Incident: Volume III, Exhibits, Book 5 – Miscellaneous Documents, Overlays, Sketches, Statements and Administrative (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1970), 765–6.

[3] 'The Kit Carson Scout Program 1966–1968', 18 January 1969, 15250311001, Folder 11, Box 03, Ogden Williams Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 2–3.

[4] For examples, see 'Interview with Marvin Mathiak', 8 August 2000, OH0011, Marvin Mathiak Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University; T. Prater, *Echo Five Papa* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2002), 201–2.

to be able to adjust to working together with American soldiers.[5] The majority of the scouts were South Vietnamese defectors from the PLAF, with a sizable minority of North Vietnamese PAVN defectors and Khmer volunteers, turning the Kit Carson Scouts into a uniquely diverse force.

Why did men like Phan Chot, whose daughter had been killed by American soldiers during the My Lai massacre, volunteer to become a Kit Carson Scout? What lay behind their choices not only to defect from the PLAF and PAVN, but to volunteer for a role that was dangerous and that put them in a position in which they would have to fight against their former comrades? In this article, I argue that the defector's negative experiences with the PLAF and PAVN informed their choice to defect and that the search for a better quality of life for themselves and for their families led some former soldiers to become scouts. Pragmatic reasons often prevailed over ideological reasons, but the diversity in motivations show the complexity of the choice that defectors made.

To gain an understanding of not only the Kit Carson Scouts but also the larger North and South Vietnamese experiences during the war requires looking beyond the Vietnam War as simply an episode in American history. As Edward Miller and Tuong Vu have written, a focus on Vietnamese agency in the Vietnam War is an efficient way of revealing the complex dimensions of the war's impact on Vietnamese society and its social and cultural dynamics, a topic that only in the last two decades has been given proper attention after decades of American-centric scholarship since the end of the war.[6] Therefore, this article engages with the current Vietnam War scholarship focusing on Vietnamese agency and this allows us to explore the complex space that the Kit Carson Scouts inhabit and how they rationalised their decision to defect and volunteer. Furthermore, using the Kit Carson Scouts as an example to investigate agency and motivation, we have the opportunity to compare possible differences in motivations to volunteer between soldiers from South and North Vietnam.

[5] R. Rewkouski, 'Hoi Chanh to Citizen', *American Traveler*, 12 September 1968, 4–5; W. Hayes, 'Once VC, now Kit Carson', *Southern Cross*, 5 June 1970, 3; G.W. McKillips, 'A Lesson From History', *Uptight*, Spring 1970, 10.

[6] E. Miller and T. Vu, 'The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War: Agency and Society in the Study of the Second Indochina War', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 4:3 (2009), 1–11. Since the early 2000s, a great deal of scholarship reflecting this 'Vietnamisation' of Vietnam War historiography has been published. Monographs include, but are not limited to, Nguyen L.T, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); E. Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); J. Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance: Ngo Dinh Diem, The United States, and 1950s Southern Vietnam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). Articles include, but are not limited to, V. Nguyen-Marshall, 'Student Activism in Time of War: Youth in the Republic of Vietnam, 1960s–1970s', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 10/2 (2015), 43–81; N. Tran, 'South Vietnamese Identity, American Intervention and the Newspaper *Chinh Luan* [Political Discussion], 1965–1969', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 1/1–2 (2006), 169–209; S. Fear, 'The Ambiguous Legacy of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam's Second Republic (1967–1975)', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 11/1 (2016): 1–75; Heather Marie Stur, 'Blurred lines: the home front, the battlefront, and the wartime relationship between citizens and government in the Republic of Vietnam', *War & Society* 38/1 (2019) 57–79.

The Kit Carson Scouts have remained a footnote in the Vietnam War's historiography, with only one academic article covering the program. Rather than presenting the scouts as individuals affected by events and their own experiences, Tal Tovy's sole focus in that article is to place the scout program in the context of strategy, and the program's contribution to the American war effort. Nowhere are the scouts' motivations for defection considered: rather than revealing personal reasons for joining, Tovy indicates that motivations are those of the American commanders.

The main reason for the lack of research into the Kit Carson Scout has been the scarcity of primary sources that can tell their stories. Unlike other soldiers on both sides of the conflict, the Kit Carson Scouts have remained silent since the end of the war and no post-war accounts have surfaced. American and Vietnamese archival sources reveal a wealth of statistics and figures on the creation of the Kit Carson Scout program, how the scouts were used in the field, and what their terms of service were – but little to nothing regarding what motivated individuals to defect and volunteer. Using contemporary articles published in divisional newspapers and magazines from the United States Armed Forces in South Vietnam, post-war memoirs written by American veterans, and interviews with American veterans who worked alongside the Kit Carson Scouts, it is possible to attempt to reconstruct the lives, experiences and motivations behind the actions of the Kit Carson Scouts. In this article, the majority of the individual narratives have been drawn from contemporary articles in divisional newspapers. Although articles in divisional newspapers are valuable as one of the few contemporary places where the lives of Kit Carson Scouts were written about and where the Kit Carson Scouts had an opportunity to speak, the articles are problematic sources. The articles written about the Kit Carson Scouts were meant to justify the scouts' existence and to create trust for them among American readers with whom they were bound to work together. Therefore, the articles have a positive tone and emphasise the scouts as loyal comrades. A typical example of an article involving the Kit Carson Scouts is titled '4-39 scout saves self, his buddies' and was published in the 9th Division newspaper *The Old Reliable*.[7] It focuses on two main points: the loyalty of the Kit Carson Scout, Bui Van Bo, to his comrades in the face of battle, and the prevention of American casualties thanks to his efforts.[8] Since the focus of the article is Bui Van Bo, his name is given, but not his age or home. When the Kit Carson Scouts is not the focus of the article, the article will only refer to them as such even though American soldiers are named. Additionally, the American voice is given a priority over that of the scout who rarely gets to speak. Only the American witnesses to Bui Van Bo's actions are allowed space while Bui Van Bo's own voice is left out.

Relying exclusively on American sources is a step away from current trends in Vietnam War scholarship which emphasises the use of Vietnamese language sources, but since no such sources exists on the Kit Carson Scouts in American employment that describes or alludes to their personal motivations as far as I know, it has not been possible to use them. There are methodological challenges in overcoming

[7] '4-39 scout saves self, his buddies', *Old Reliable*, 21 May 1969, 8.
[8] In the 9th Infantry Division, Kit Carson Scouts were known as Tiger Scouts.

the fact that these stories are transferred to us through a mediated form from American writers who in turn sometimes relied on interpreters. The Kit Carson Scouts attended English classes as part of their scout training, but the results varied and some American soldiers complained that there were issues of communication between themselves and the scouts.[9] In some cases, American soldiers who had studied Vietnamese or French before their deployment to South Vietnam worked as interpreters in the field to facilitate communication between American soldiers and Kit Carson Scouts.[10] In the majority of the source material, the stories of the individual scouts are told in third-person with occasional direct quotations from the scouts themselves. Only in two cases have I found an account by a Kit Carson Scout telling their own story in full. The first account is Phan Chot's testimony. The second is by Kit Carson Scout Nguyen Dau whose story was recorded by an American Marine who in turn transcribed it and published it in his memoirs decades later.[11] Although these two accounts are a rarity, the diversity in narratives and reasons that the Kit Carson Scouts give throughout the available American-centric source material is an indication to the possibility of extracting these stories through an American filter.

The scarcity of sources and the inherent bias in the American-centric sources makes it challenging to draw large, general conclusions about the Kit Carson Scouts, but it does not prevent us from gaining a view into the tough choices they had to make. Using post-colonial methodology to read the source material, specifically the subaltern history methods used by Ranajit Guha, I believe it is possible to highlight the American-centric discourse and separate the scout's voice from its American custodian and present it on its own terms. Guha writes that scarcity and fragmentation of the source material is the largest obstacle for subaltern history and to overcome it, one has to contextualise the acts and voices of the actor.[12] Through this method, we can attempt to restore the agency of those whom the South Vietnamese government official Nguyen Xuan Phong called the 'person who is often mentioned in terms of statistics but seldom described in terms of human feelings and aspirations'.[13]

[9] S. Watson, 'The Making of a Kit Carson Scout', *Tropic Lightning News*, 10 August 1970, 1; C.M. Leighton, *War Stories: A GI Reporter in Vietnam, 1970–1971* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016), 33; G. Rausch, 'Kit Carson Scouts', *The Hurricane*, April 1969, 10–13.

[10] D. Coughlin, 'Scout's French Upsets VC', *American Traveler*, 30 December 1968, 1; 'Scout Is "Kit Carson" Of GI Unit', *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, 4 March 1968, 7; W.L. Christofferson, 'Drummer, Ex-Guerrilla Form Kit Carson Team', *Sea Tiger*, 30 June 1967, 8.

[11] W.L. Buchanan, *Full Circle: A Marine Rifle Company in Vietnam* (Mill Valley: Baylaurel Press, 2003), 70–4.

[12] R. Guha, 'Chandra's Death', in *Subaltern Studies V: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. by Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 138–139. Using these methods from the early years of subaltern studies will elicit Gayatari Chakravorty Spivak's question 'can the Subaltern speak?'. Although Spivak answers in the negative, citing that ideological structures do not give space for the subaltern voice, the debate surrounding this question continues and is still an important question that researchers should consider.

[13] Nguyen X.P., 'That Unknown Vietnamese: The Returnee', *Viet-Nam Info Series*, 14, November 1969, 2.

Chieu Hoi and the Kit Carson scout program

In 1963, the government of the Republic of Vietnam (hereafter referred to as South Vietnam) launched an initiative meant to encourage men and women participating in the armed rebellion against the government to defect and return to the South Vietnamese side without the risk of punishment. This program was given the name *Phong Trao Chieu Tap Khang Chien Lam Duong* (translated as 'The Movement to Regroup Misled Members of the Resistance') but was shortened in Vietnamese to *Chieu Hoi* (*Chieu*, 'to appeal', *Hoi*, 'to return').[14] The defectors became known as *Hoi Chanh* ('returnee'). To become a *Hoi Chanh*, a soldier had to defect voluntarily, 'return', to the South Vietnamese government. A soldier could therefore not become a *Hoi Chanh* by surrendering or being captured in battle. As the conflict in South Vietnam escalated, the program expanded and began to include North Vietnamese soldiers as *Hoi Chanh*. Potential defectors learned about the *Chieu Hoi* program through different means such as leaflets, broadcasts of government propaganda or broadcasts where defectors themselves spoke of their experiences as a *Hoi Chanh* in an attempt to encourage their former comrades to defect. In a typical month, 713 million leaflets were dropped from the air and 3 million leaflets were given out by hand.[15] Between 1963 and 1970, a total of 150,000 PLAF soldiers and approximately 2,000 North Vietnamese soldiers defected under the *Chieu Hoi* program.[16] The most common way to *Chieu Hoi* began with a potential defector finding a leaflet. After the defector voluntarily surrendered, the defector was taken to the nearest *Chieu Hoi* centre where the defector would spend the next 45–60 days. During this period, the defector could choose between a series of options of what to do with their new life under the protection of the South Vietnamese government.[17] Some chose to become Kit Carson Scouts.

The Kit Carson Scout program was launched in November 1966 by the United States Marine Corps. The concept was based on using the previous military experience of defectors and their knowledge of their former areas of operations to help soldiers in the field find the enemy. The program was named after famed American frontier scout and guide Kit Carson (1809–1868), but the name was changed to the Vietnamese *Luc Luong 66* ('Force 66') in 1970. The majority of the Kit Carson Scouts served in the United States Army, the United States Marine Corps, and with the US Navy SEALs, but a smaller number of scouts served with South Vietnamese, Australian (after January 1969), Thai (after August 1969), and South Korean (after December 1970) forces.[18] At its height in 1970, there were a total of 2,500 active Kit Carson Scouts. With the drawback of American forces, this number became

[14] In contemporary literature, *Chieu Hoi* is commonly translated as 'Open Arms'.
[15] J. A. Koch, *The Chieu Hoi Program in South Vietnam, 1963–1971* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1973), xix, 13, 20–1, 66.
[16] A. Sweetland, *Rallying Potential Among the North Vietnamese Armed Forces* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1970), ix.
[17] Koch, viii, 78–83.
[18] Ibid., 102–105. 'The Kit Carson Scout Program 1966–1968', 2–3.

increasingly smaller. At the end of 1971, only 400 Kit Carson Scouts remained.[19] Between 1966 and 1973, a total of 369 Kit Carson Scouts were killed.[20]

South Vietnamese defectors

For some South Vietnamese defectors, the road to defection began with being forcibly conscripted by the NLF. Although initially organised on a pure volunteer basis, the NLF had to increasingly rely on forced conscription and kidnapping to increase its ranks as the war progressed and casualties increased.[21] This forced conscription remained a constant reason as to why some soldiers decided to defect as soon as possible, but it was the consequences of the forced conscription that became the basis for the choice to become a Kit Carson Scout. A representative example of this is the case of 33-year-old Tu Duc.

Tu Duc had spent fifteen years working as a farmer and lived with his wife and three small children in an area close to Qui Nhon in South Vietnam. One night, Tu Duc received a visit from an armed PLAF soldier who delivered a draft notice to him. He was forced at gunpoint to leave his family to undergo training to become a guerrilla soldier. The reluctant guerrilla soldier, filled with contempt towards the NLF, was drawn by *Chieu Hoi* pamphlets he found and managed to desert in 1967. Tu Duc reported to the district headquarters near Pleiku where he became a *Hoi Chanh*. Tu Duc was reunited with his family and returned to his life as a farmer. This could have put an end to Tuc Duc's military life had not the experiences he had lived through as a guerrilla soldier left deep scars. The hate he felt towards the NLF remained: 'I wanted to fight them (the VC), but I didn't know how'.[22] Tu Duc found the answer in April 1969 when he officially became a Kit Carson Scout.[23] A similar example involves 29-year-old Van Thoi who was separated from his family after being kidnapped by the NLF in 1966. To escape the harsh life of the labour camp he had been held in, Van Thoi joined the PLAF and was placed in the *Dong Nai* regiment. Throughout his time as a guerrilla soldier, Van Thoi meticulously planned his revenge by noting all hidden supply caches belonging to his regiment. Van Thoi became a defector in 1970 when his regiment was positioned northeast of Lai Khe and promptly began to assist elements from the American 1st Infantry Division in finding weapons caches in the area. This was not enough for Van Thoi who planned on becoming a Kit Carson Scout to fulfil his revenge.[24]

The desire for revenge was not always tied to forced conscription. When the PLAF or PAVN threatened or murdered family members of men who fought in their armies, they created future Kit Carson Scouts. One Kit Carson Scout, only identified as Sergeant Long, had defected after the PLAF murdered several of his

[19] Ibid., 58.
[20] Tovy, 80.
[21] M.L. Lanning and D. Cragg, *Inside the VC and NVA: The Real Story of North Vietnam's Armed Forces* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 46.
[22] The VC, or the *Viet Cong*, was a common nickname given to PLAF soldiers by South Vietnamese, American, and other 'Free World' forces. Interpolation is translator's.
[23] 'A Lesson From History', 10.
[24] S.M. Richel, 'Taking Charlie's Supplies', *Danger Forward*, Winter 1970, 43.

family members.[25] One unnamed middle aged South Vietnamese Kit Carson Scout who had fought against French forces during the 1950s and later against American forces during the 1960s chose to become a Kit Carson Scout after the PAVN had laid waste to a South Vietnamese village and murdered several of his relatives.[26] Vo Van Nam, raised in a middle-class South Vietnamese family and whose father was a lieutenant in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, joined a PLAF unit when he left his home located at the edge of Tay Ninh at age 16. Vo Van Nam spent two years as a guerrilla soldier before he defected in September 1967 upon hearing that the PLAF intended to kill his father. As a *Hoi Chanh*, Vo Van Nam decided to become a Kit Carson Scout. He was assigned to the American 25th Infantry Division and after serving for a month, he was given leave for three days. Vo Van Nam travelled back home to Tay Ninh to visit his parents. That was when the PLAF struck. They surrounded the village and began to shout for Vo Van Nam's father. 'VC surrounded our village and called poppa [sic] san. Lieutenant Nam, Lieutenant Nam!'[27] Vo Van Nam later said. His father asked him to flee which he did right before guerrilla soldiers broke into his home and killed his father. Vo Van Nam returned to the 2th Infantry Division terrified and in despair but ready to go out into the field to find the men who had killed his father.[28]

The terms of service and living conditions for a PLAF guerrilla soldier in the field was a factor that contributed to the creation of defectors and consequently Kit Carson Scouts. Besides forced conscription and death threats aimed at themselves or their families, many of the Kit Carson Scouts told stories of malnutrition, exhaustion, poor leadership, harsh discipline, the absence of any comforts in exchange for hard and dangerous work, and political and personal disillusionment with the NLF. In 24-year-old Kit Carson Scout Nguyen Dau's story of what led him to defect the PLAF, as told to US Marine William L. Buchanan who recorded and transcribed the story, he was forcibly recruited in November 1965 and taken to the Ho Chi Minh trail as part of a supply detail to carry ammunition and heavy equipment up and down the trail. A trip back and forth took one month and had to be endured on short rations.

> They made us carry very heavy loads. The hills were steep. Many died of hunger and exhaustion. I saw six soldiers die from disease, wounds or the heavy work. It was impossible to carry food because of the very heavy loads.

When Nguyen Dau complained about the conditions that he and his comrades had to work in, the captain only responded with a political lecture.[29] Because of this, Nguyen Dau concluded that the NLF was full of lies.

Other Kit Carson Scouts reached the same conclusion and this disillusionment could take an ideological or pragmatic form. Nguyen Hoi resigned himself to

[25] R.S. Hayes, *On Point* (New York: Presidio Press, 2000), 205.
[26] J. Starita, *The Dull Knifes of Pine Ridge: A Lakota Odyssey* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 2002), 279.
[27] Original punctuation.
[28] M. Caldwell, 'In Memoriam: Naminsky, Kit Carson Scout of the 2/14th', *Tropic Lightning News*, 24 June 1968, 4–5.
[29] Buchanan, 71–2.

becoming a PLAF soldier after being forcibly conscripted from home in Ky An. The 23-year-old's direct experience with the PLAF made him slowly realise that the NLF could not fulfil their promises and that they were deceiving the South Vietnamese people. Nguyen defected in December 1967 and was accepted as a Kit Carson Scout a month later.[30] Truong Kinh from Xuyen Hoa first encountered the PLAF after his village had been overrun. The 35-year-old was sentenced to death in a NLF show trial for being a senior member of the local militia protecting his community. He was given the choice to either die or join the PLAF. Truong chose the latter and became a believer in the cause of the NLF, fighting in many successful engagements and ultimately becoming a platoon commander. Truong's personal experience with North Vietnamese military and political cadres became a turning point in his doubts about the cause of the NLF, making him reach the conclusion that the 'northerners demanded too much'. The second turning point came when his family, supposedly protected and taken care of by the NLF, was forced to work without compensation and lived in near starvation. 'I realized that even if the Communists won the war, we southerners would get nothing, that life would be very hard for my wife and three children. So I became a defector.'[31]

After his stint on the Ho Chi Minh trail, Nguyen Dau fought as part of the PLAF D-26 Main Force Company where he experienced more hardships in the field and death as his fellow soldiers were killed by American and South Vietnamese forces. After months of being part of the PLAF, Nguyen Dau had enough. Nguyen Dau set out to return to his home, Hoa Dong village, where he rested and ate before walking to Danang to defect to the South Vietnamese government. In his own words: 'I left the VC because I found life extremely difficult and unrewarding'.[32] This was a reoccurring assessment made by Kit Carson Scouts. Nguyen Toa lived in Ky Chang near Chu Lai when he was forced into the PLAF at the age of 16 and spent only a few months as a soldier before defecting, citing the dangers of being a PLAF soldier and the lack of food and medicine for contributing in making his final decision.[33] Ngo Van Nam felt that life as a PLAF assistant platoon commander was a miserable one, and the 36-year-old particularly disliked the harsh discipline.[34] Nguyen Tong, a 21-year-old from Song Cao District, and 16-year-old Nguyen Thieu from Tuy Hoa District, who both were forcibly conscripted into the PLAF, likewise cite the misery of service.[35] Dao Van Ut was pushed beyond his limits to the point where he believed that his service in the PLAF would eventually lead to his death.[36] Alongside this, some Kit Carson Scouts mention experiencing the death of friends, being injured in action, or being disillusioned by false promises of impending victory on the battlefield as contributing reasons for their final decision. Le Phuoc Chuoug had been forcibly conscripted into the PLAF under death threats to his

[30] J. Bruce, 'Kit Carson Hoi: "One of the Best"', *Southern Cross*, 11 May 1968, 4.
[31] J. T. Wheeler, 'Ex-Cong Now Kit Carson Scouts: Band Used to Ferret Out Guerrillas', *Chicago Tribune*, 22 October 1969, 34.
[32] Buchanan, 73.
[33] 'Drummer, Ex-Guerrilla Form Kit Carson Team', 8.
[34] R.W. Engelhardt, 'R&R: U.S.A.', *Army Digest*, July 1969, 49.
[35] Jeffrey Tarter, 'Kit Carson Scouts Act As Jungle Ears And Eyes', *Ivy Leaf*, 29 September 1968, 3.
[36] C. DeYoung, 'Chieu Hoi … and then What?', *Tropic Lightning News*, 14 July 1969, 6.

wife and seven children. Without a will to fight, the 36-year-old desired nothing else but to flee when fired upon by American forces. When he was asked what it was like to be on the receiving end of an American airstrike, 'he just closed his eyes and shook his head. He didn't want to talk about it. He didn't want to remember'.[37] Le Phuoc Chuoug's experience in battle, his fear of fighting American troops, and the fate of his comrades who had been killed in battle led to his decision to defect. According to 29-year-old Le Van Day, he had no 'personal grievance with our [PLAF] company commander, but everyone agreed he was a big liar. For even when our unit suffered heavy casualties, he still spoke of victory. But too many friends of mine were killed for me to believe it'.[38] Tran Minh Hoang was a 20-year-old who had spent five years in the PLAF before he defected due to his disillusionment in the aftermath of the failed Tet Offensive in 1968 where he had fought for five days in Saigon. 'The VC didn't win during Tet as they said they would. The North Vietnamese Army didn't complete the revolution in two months as they promised when they entered the war.'[39] The failure of the Tet Offensive led to an increase in defectors. While only 18,161 defectors were recorded in 1968, 1969 saw more than 47,023 defectors. This was the highest number of defectors recorded throughout the program's existence. There would, however, be a dramatic decrease in defectors and in turn, Kit Carson Scouts, as the Americans gradually began to withdraw in 1970 and the program was phased out.[40]

Nguyen Trong Thu, like Tran Minh Hoang, was also a veteran of five years when he and his squad of PLAF sappers struck against the American firebase LZ Buff. The squad was decimated during the attack and left Nguyen Trong Thu seriously injured. While recuperating in a North Vietnamese field hospital, his recent experiences made him doubt his future in the PLAF. Upon recuperating, Nguyen Trong Thu broke out of the hospital and defected to the South Vietnamese government.[41] An unnamed Kit Carson Scout from Bien Hoa Province who had been a PLAF squad leader for two years explained that 'I became a *Hoi Chanh* because I was tired of fighting' and that '[t]he VC say victory is soon, but that is a lie. I am fighting again now because to defeat the VC is the only way I can live'.[42] Nguyen Xuan Phong, a South Vietnamese government official who was familiar with the defectors, spoke about the loss of faith and the disillusionment that this unnamed Kit Carson Scout expressed as two of five major motivations for defection.[43]

The benefits that came with serving as a Kit Carson Scout functioned as an additional motivational factor against the backdrop of their previous military experience in the PLAF. Despite the danger in the field, the life of a scout was far more

[37] 'Tiger Scout recalls dangers of VC life', *Old Reliable*, 13 November 1969, 2.
[38] G. Emerson, 'Ex-Vietcong Finds Life Easier as a Scout for U.S.', *New York Times*, 27 May 1970, 17.
[39] J.R. Anderson, 'Former V.C. Sees Truth', *Tropic Lightning News*, 29 December 1969, 6.
[40] HQ USMACV, *Command History, Volume II, 1970* (Washington, DC: DAMH-HSR-D, 1971), VIII-68–VIII-70.
[41] T. Maus and B. Eftink, 'Infiltration Tactics in Vietnam Now Being Taught By Enemy Experts', *Army Digest*, January 1970, 38–9.
[42] D. Furse, 'Kit Carsons Strike Back', *Army Digest*, September 1968, 48.
[43] The three remaining categories included hardships, fear, and nostalgia (concern for family). All three categories are brought up in this article: Nguyen X.P., 3–4.

comfortable than that of a PLAF soldier. The basic service conditions were in most cases equal to that of an American soldier and remedied many of the shortcomings that scouts had previously experienced. Scouts were issued with two sets of uniform and a complete set of equipment, although this could vary depending on the requirements necessary for the scouts to perform their job. Scouts were provided with daily rations and were housed by the unit they served in.[44] In the early days of the program, scouts were only authorised to receive emergency medical treatment in US facilities. Complete medical and dental treatment in US and allied medical facilities were soon authorised.[45] Wounded scouts would therefore have been treated alongside American soldiers, something which could result in surprising encounters like the young scout who during his first day at the 2nd Surgical Hospital in Lai Khe came face to face with Miss America 1969.[46]

An additional benefit was the salary. Kit Carson Scouts' salaries were far higher than those given to PLAF soldiers. Le Phuoc Chuoug earned 240 piastres a month as a PLAF soldier while Le Van Day earned only 80 piastres a month, and there were no guarantees that they would be paid each month.[47] In comparison, an average Kit Carson Scout salary between 1966 and 1970 was 5,000 piastres a month, which was roughly the same as an unmarried ARVN staff sergeant. Five thousand piastres equalled around USD 42–45 at the 1960s exchange rate.[48] In May 1970, due to increasing living costs for scouts and the increased salary of ARVN soldiers, it was decided to increase the salary to 7,500 piastres for an ordinary scout. Company scout leaders could earn between 8,000 piastres, and a division scout leader could earn 12,500 piastres.[49] On top of this salary, a Scout could earn bonuses by performing special missions, for example where a Scout disguised himself as an enemy combatant and go to enemy-held villages to collect information about future attacks aimed at American troops.[50]

A good salary and economic benefits were important to men who had family and relatives in South Vietnam and the responsibility to support them. The choices made by individual Kit Carson Scouts must be considered within the context of Vietnamese culture, in particularly the important family culture and the traditional patriarchal power structures within that culture. Core concepts such as the 'moral debt' (*on*) that children are owed to their parents from the moment they are born and that can never be fully repaid, remained a basic part of life for adult men in South Vietnam throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. 'While the parents are alive', writes anthropologist Shaun Kingsley Malarney, 'recognition and payment

[44] MAC-V Directive No. 525–6, 'Luc Luong 66 Program (Kit Carson Scout Programs)', 25 June 1970 in Koch, 189, 207. Annex E has a full list of clothing and equipment that could be furnished to a Kit Carson Scout.

[45] Ibid., 189; D. Furse, 'Converted Viet Cong prove worth as guides, fighters', *Old Reliable*, 24 July 1968, 4.

[46] 'A Date With Miss America', *Danger Forward*, Fall 1969, 14.

[47] 'Tiger Scout recalls dangers of VC life', 2; 'Ex-Vietcong Finds Life Easier as a Scout for U.S.', 17.

[48] 'Kit Carsons Strike Back', 48; 'Ex-Cong Now Kit Carson Scouts: Band Used to Ferret Out Guerrillas', 34.

[49] HQ USMACV, VIII–74.

[50] 'R&R: U.S.A.', 49.

of the [moral] debt occur through obedience to the parents' wishes, financial support if earning an income, and care for the parents when they are old'.[51] This is tied into the importance and obligation of filial piety (*hieu*) that family relations are structured around. Against this background, family-related benefits could have additional allure to a prospective volunteer. Resettlement in a *Chieu Hoi* hamlet was offered to those with families who could not return to their home villages due to the security situation in the area.[52] Every scout was given thirty days leave each year plus an additional three days leave every month to spend time at home with their family, with the possibility to request emergency leave or gain additional leave through good service.[53] Family-related benefits ensured that the separation from their families that the scouts had endured during their time as insurgents would not happen again, with additional guarantees that their families would be protected by the South Vietnamese government. Additionally, the scout and their family could feel safe knowing that if the scout was killed in service, his body would be transported to his home village where he would be given a full military burial in a new uniform and in accordance with local Vietnamese customs. Furthermore, his family would be compensated with the equivalent of a scout's full year's salary.[54] In some cases, the family could be the ones to encourage an individual to defect. Bui Quoc Thanh, a 22-year-old who had served three years in the PLAF, stated that '[m]y family also wanted me to Chieu Hoi [...] They did not like what the Viet Cong were doing and helped convince me that I was wrong to work for the VC'.[55]

North Vietnamese defectors

Why did PAVN soldiers defect and join the Kit Carson Scouts? The answer to that question comes to us through fragments due to the scarcity of sources relating to North Vietnamese Kit Carson Scouts. Although this makes it difficult to draw general conclusions surrounding the choice to volunteer, it is possible to discern some reasons through the individual voices found in the source material.

Comparatively few North Vietnamese soldiers volunteered to become Kit Carson Scouts. Although the exact amount of North Vietnamese scouts is not known, there were few North Vietnamese defectors (2,000) in comparison to the South Vietnamese (150,000). In a 1970 RAND Corporation survey, only three out of 81 North Vietnamese defectors stated that they were planning to become a Kit Carson Scout upon leaving the *Chieu Hoi* centre.[56] Unlike South Vietnamese scouts, the family-related benefits meant little to North Vietnamese defectors who were a long way from home and who could not bring their families under South Vietnamese protection. One exception to this was the case of Phan Van Thanh, whose parents

[51] S.K. Malarney, *Culture, Ritual and Revolution in Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 112.
[52] Koch, 84.
[53] F. Rezzonico, 'Future Lifesavers: Well-Treated Ralliers May Become Scouts', *Tropic Lightning News*, 18 May 1970, 8; A. Brown, 'Kit Carson Discoverer', *Tropic Lightning News*, 14 July 1969, 6.
[54] 'Kit Carsons Scouts', 13; Koch, 103.
[55] T. Jensen, 'Kit Carson Scouts', *Rendezvous With Destiny*, Spring 1970, 31.
[56] Sweetland, 26.

had left him behind in North Vietnam in 1960 as they escaped to a village near Saigon. As a private in the PAVN, Phan Van Thanh was sent to South Vietnam where he defected, thinking that this would reunite him with his parents.[57] Phan Van Thanh was extraordinarily lucky to have his parents in South Vietnam. While defectors might have close relatives who had moved to South Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva Agreement, the defector's parents, wives, and children are likely to have been in North Vietnam.[58] The fear of possible punishment against their families by the North Vietnamese government prevented North Vietnamese soldiers from defecting. When asked why other soldiers in their unit did not defect, the majority of defectors answered that their families in North Vietnam would suffer if they did.[59] The family of a defector could be ostracised and humiliated through such means as having a sign that read 'home of a traitor' placed outside the family home. Other possible punishments included a reduction of the family's food rations and the loss of employment for family members.[60]

The motivations and choices made by North Vietnamese defectors resemble those of their South Vietnamese counterparts, but as in the previously mentioned case of family-related benefits, the choices made must be understood within a North Vietnamese context. The social, economic, and political realities of North Vietnam in conjunction with the experiences of serving in the PAVN shaped the decisions of North Vietnamese soldiers to defect and join the Kit Carson Scouts. One North Vietnamese Kit Carson Scout, Tran Van Tranh, was a former PAVN captain who had fought in the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, spent two years training in China, and infiltrated to South Vietnam as early as 1959. What ultimately led to his defection was his political disillusionment with the North Vietnamese government and ten years after his initial infiltration south, Tran Van Tranh found himself as a chief instructor at the Kit Carson School in Quang Tri with the honorary rank of Sergeant Major.[61] An unnamed Kit Carson Scout who was originally drafted into the PAVN but who ended up in the PLAF *Dong Nai* regiment as a sniper after he had infiltrated south stated that his disillusionment with the cause of the PLAF and their actions against the civilian population was the reason he became a scout. 'I think the VC are trying to deceive the people', he stated, 'also, I disagree with their tactics of cruelty in civilians and military'.[62]

North Vietnamese defectors more commonly drew their motivations for joining the Kit Carson Scouts from their experiences with the PAVN. The government of

[57] R. Byrne, 'Scout Finds Former Unit', *Tropic Lightning News*, 9 March 1970, 3.

[58] Twenty-seven out of ninety-seven North Vietnamese defectors answered that they had close relatives in South Vietnam while twenty-nine had distant relatives. The majority forty-one had no relatives in South Vietnam. Sweetland, 14.

[59] Forty-three out of 172 North Vietnamese defectors gave that answer. Other answers included 'don't yet believe in chieu hoi policy' (37), 'afraid of being caught and punished' (28), 'not able to find the way out' (20), 'closely watched' (14), and 'fear of being ill-treated by the GVN' (6). Ibid., 25.

[60] Ibid., 3, 25.

[61] This honorary rank was bestowed on him by Major General Bruno A. Hochmuth, division commander of the 3rd Marine Division. W.V. Cowan, 'Kit Carson Scouts', *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1969, 31.

[62] 'Converted Viet Cong prove worth as guides, fighters', 4.

North Vietnam introduced a universal draft law in 1960 in which all men between the ages of 18 and 27 were eligible for the draft. During the Vietnam War, the draft age was expanded to all men aged 16 and 45 as well as extending the duration of the military service from a minimum of two years to indefinitely.[63] The reactions and attitudes towards the draft among draftees varied and being sent to South Vietnam without knowing when or if they were going to return home made some soldiers contemplate defection early on. Nguyen Van Luong was 18 years old when he was drafted into the PAVN from his home village in North Vietnam. He had considered defection since leaving North Vietnam to infiltrate south and it took him two years before he managed to defect. By the time of his defection, he had reached the rank of sergeant and had participated in the battle of Khe Sanh, experiences that had a strong impact on his decision to join the Kit Carson Scouts. Nguyen Van Luong had grown tired of killing and perhaps unique in his motivation, he joined the Kit Carson Scouts to save his former comrades. By convincing North Vietnamese soldiers to surrender or defect, he hoped to save lives.[64] As in the case of their southern counterparts, physical and mental hardships were common reasons for defection. When asked what they had feared the most while in the PAVN, the majority of defectors answered fighting and dying in the war.[65] Tran Quoc Hong was the adopted son of a Hanoi university professor who was drafted out of university in 1966. He trained for three months and was then sent to join the 18th Regiment, 325th PAVN Division. After infiltrating down the Ho Chi Minh trail, Tran Quoc Hong experienced his baptism of fire in the An Lao Valley, Binh Dinh Province. The heavy fighting took a toll on his regiment, with many of the casualties being his friends.

> I knew that if I continued to fight, I too would die. Then one day I read one of the 'Chieu Hoi' leaflets dropped from your helicopters. It said I would be well treated if I surrendered. So I decided to give up.[66]

Tran Quoc Hong slipped away in the night and reached a 1st Cavalry Division base camp where he defected. Later, he was offered the opportunity to become a Kit Carson Scout which he promptly accepted.[67] A slightly different case is that of PAVN lieutenant and former Viet Minh soldier Bui Ngoc Phep whose story was retold by ARVN officer Nguyen Cong Luan in his memoirs. On the night of 31 January 1968, Bui was given the order to lay mines under a bridge connecting an area close to the National *Chieu Hoi* Centre to the Saigon Zoo. While waiting for a friendly battalion to cross it, Bui overheard the conversation between two guards, an ARVN marine and an armed propaganda team member, a former PAVN soldier,

[63] B. Teerawichitchainan, 'Trends in Military Service in Northern Vietnam, 1950–1995: A Socio-demographic Approach', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4/3 (2009), 63–65, 91.
[64] J. Clare, 'Scout and US Friend Make Successful Team', *American Traveler*, 17 February 1969, 1–2.
[65] Forty-eight out of seventy-two defectors answered that they feared 'death, war, fighting'. Other answers included 'did not fear anything' (7), 'getting sick' (5), 'never see family again' (4), 'worry about family' (3), 'get caught when rallying' (3), 'left behind when wounded' (1), and '[to] live under communism' (1): Sweetland, 26.
[66] A. Schlosser, 'Flight To Freedom', *First Team*, Summer 1969, 31–2.
[67] Schlosser, 31–2.

who was explaining his reasons for defecting. Overhearing the defector's life story, Bui found out that the soldier had come from a village near his home and, receiving a thorough explanation of the *Chieu Hoi* program through this overheard conversation, something clicked in him. The PAVN battalion never reached the bridge, Bui collected his explosives and returned to his unit. Months later, he defected and became a Kit Carson Scout with the 11th Cavalry Regiment.[68]

An example of how the fear of death and subsequent salvation from it could create Kit Carson Scouts can be found in the experience of an unnamed scout from Hanoi. His PAVN unit had been the target of a B-52 airstrike with the only two survivors being him and his friend, who subsequently died of malaria. The lone survivor was barely alive when he was found by a group of American Marines who took care of him and later gave him the opportunity to become a Kit Carson Scout. The experience of being the target of a B-52 airstrike made him conclude that an American victory was all but certain.[69] Other factors that had bothered potential defectors the most while they had been in the PAVN include harsh discipline, demanding cadres, being forced to work while sick, homesickness, too much political indoctrination, and a lack of medicine and food.[70] When a soldier from the 305th Second PAVN Sapper Battalion was asked why he wanted to become a Kit Carson Scout, he only stated 'food'.[71]

Conclusions

Phan Chot explains his reasons for defecting and ultimately joining the Kit Carson Scouts:

> I decided to Chieu Hoi because life with the VC was to [sic] difficult, it was difficult to make a living, and I continually lived in fear of being killed or having my family killed. My wife and 3 children now live in Son Tinh. I am a Kit Carson Scout (number 253, Chu Lai). I work for the Americans.[72]

As a scout, he was able to help the investigation into the atrocity that took the life of his daughter through his testimony and by participating in the ground survey of his former home village. His services were deemed invaluable by US

[68] Nguyen C.L, *Nationalist in the Viet Nam Wars: Memoirs of a Victim Turned Soldier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 568. Nguyen was particularly positive about the Kit Carson Scouts, considering several of them to be heroes. The relationships between scouts and South Vietnamese officials and soldiers require an in-depth investigation, but many ARVN soldiers did not have the same positive view as Nguyen. American soldiers mention how scouts employed by the US spoke condescendingly about the ARVN while ARVN soldiers considered them to be traitors and 'once disloyal, always disloyal': 'Don't Mean Nuthin', Manuscript, Marvin P. Mathiak, 1999, Folder 02, Box 01, Marvin Mathiak Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, 50; G.R. Smith and A. Maki, *Death in the Delta: Diary of a Navy SEAL* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 66, 77, 108–9.

[69] Prater, 201.

[70] Sweetland, 27.

[71] J. Calderonelle, 'Clash Nets 4 NVA', *Southern Cross*, 12 December 1969, 6.

[72] Unsworn Statement of Phan Chot, 766.

Army investigators in 'reconstructing specific events, locating areas of interests, describing routes of march, etc'.[73]

When Phan Chot defected in the summer of 1969, he joined thousands of other defectors who made the same choice that year. His reasons reflect the diversity of motivations that South Vietnamese scouts have given for their choices. The rough reality and poor conditions of serving as a PLAF soldier, fear of death or injury, the difficulty of providing for one's family, and the fear for the protection of one's family stand together with anger at being mistreated, revenge for PLAF wrongdoings, and political disillusionment as reoccurring reasons for defection and joining the Kit Carson Scouts. Additionally, a scout was not necessarily limited to one single reason, as Phan Chot's case demonstrates. In comparison, broader patterns of motivations among North Vietnamese scouts are harder to discern due to fragmentary sources. The considerably fewer North Vietnamese defectors and scouts can be explained by the distance from home and threats of government reprisals against loved ones which effectively stopped PAVN soldiers from defecting. Those who did defect and join the Kit Carson Scouts gave a variety of reasons for their choice, ranging from political disillusionment to the fear of death. The case of Nguyen Van Luong, the scout who wanted to save PAVN soldiers, shows how unique the motivations of the Kit Carson Scouts could be.

In their studies of South Vietnamese soldiers Robert K. Brigham and Andrew Wiest emphasise the importance of family survival in South Vietnam during the war as the primary motivational factor that drove ARVN soldiers to continue fighting to the end. Over time, argues Brigham, a subnational culture developed among South Vietnamese soldiers in which the meaning of the war rested on the survival of their families.[74] No such consensus was reached among the Kit Carson Scouts as the variety of motivations reveal. Family survival played a crucial part for some while others, such as Le Van Day, was more interested in an easier life, a good wage, and an 'escape from harsh, unending discipline'.[75] That Le Van Day was searching for an easier life within the Kit Carson Scouts despite the danger such a position would bring suggests that he, as well as other scouts, saw joining the program as a strategy that would continue his life as a combatant on his own terms. Bui Quoc Thanh, for example, motivated his choice to volunteer for the Kit Carson Scout program as being based on his fascination with the tactics and weapons of the American forces: 'I had always been impressed with the way American soldiers operate, especialy [sic] with the Cobras, artillery and the M-16 rifle. Now, I want to work with the Americans and use their equipment'.[76] Furthermore, large PLAF/PAVN military defeats could bring in new volunteers who had been falsely

[73] Memo for Record, Ground Survey by the Army Preliminary Investigation into the My Lai Incident, 8 January 1970, with Tabs A through E, in Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations Into the My Lai Incident: Volume III, Exhibits, Book 5, 391. For the location of Phan Chot's home, site 22, in the village, see map on page 403.

[74] Brigham, 109–30, 298–9.

[75] 'Ex-Vietcong Finds Life Easier as a Scout for U.S.', 17.

[76] Jensen, 31.

promised victories, such as in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive that caused record numbers of PLAF/PAVN soldiers to defect.

Yet what is noticeably absent is an emphasis on ideology. Political promises were broken, and some scouts defected because of political disillusionment, but none of them were seemingly drawn to defect or become scouts because of the allure of South Vietnamese politics. This can be compared with James W. Trullinger's investigation of the South Vietnamese village My Thuy Phuong in Thua Thien Province. Trullinger estimates that support for the NLF among the villagers sank from around 80 to 85 per cent to 50 per cent after the Tet Offensive while support for the South Vietnamese government only reached around 10 to15 per cent. Around the same period, 30 to 40 per cent of the villagers were uncommitted to either side.[77] The scouts embraced what the South Vietnamese government had to offer them as defectors through the *Chieu Hoi* program, but the choices made suggest a pragmatic approach to their dealings with their new patrons. Only one scout in this investigation, Tran Van Tranh, appears to have defected because of ideological differences after realising that 'South Vietnamese were better off than North Vietnamese'.[78] What this meant in ideological or practical terms remains unsaid. Larger conclusions about shifting political identities require additional sources and research to be determined.

The choices made by a Kit Carson Scout must be seen in the context of sacrifice and what such a choice meant to the defectors making it. Although South Vietnamese scouts were given the possibility to relocate their immediate family beyond the control of the NLF/PAVN, this was impossible for a North Vietnamese scout. This could be a painful choice to make, as Tran Quoc Hong experienced it: 'I knew that by turning myself in I would never be able to see my family again', Hong explained. 'Even if the war ended tomorrow, I could not return to North Vietnam.'[79] Moreover, there was the possibility that the scouts had to face more than their former friends. Some scouts, like Truong Kinh, had family members fighting for the other side and faced the painful reality of having to fight against and even kill their literal brother.

> It is impossible to be neutral in Viet Nam now. And when you choose sides it means you must kill or be killed. Many families are divided by the war. I have tried many times to convince my brother to defect, but he refuses to listen. I would not like it, but – I will help the marines ambush my brother if he will not change his mind.[80]

Through their personal agency, the Kit Carson Scouts were paramount in shaping their own fates and that of their families in war-time South Vietnam. Far from

[77] J. W. Trullinger, *Village at War: An Account of Revolution in Vietnam* (New York: Longman, 1980), 129–93. One should also consider that there were scouts who were apolitical to begin with. Nguyen Tong, for example, was 'confused by politics', which was a reason as to why he did not voluntarily join the PLAF: Tarter, 3.

[78] Cowan, 31.

[79] 'Flight To Freedom', 31.

[80] 'Ex-Cong Now Kit Carson Scouts: Band Used to Ferret Out Guerrillas', 34.

being passive participants, the scouts show a window in which researchers can explore complex questions such as loyalty, family culture, and shifting allegiances surrounding the experiences and agency of South and North Vietnamese soldiers fighting in South Vietnam. Several questions still remain in regard to the motivations of the Kit Carson Scouts, in particularly about the motivations of scouts of Khmer origin,[81] scouts who served with other 'Free World' forces, and the possibility of female Kit Carson Scouts.[82] Future researchers will hopefully be able to use a broader range of source material, ideally in Vietnamese, to reach larger conclusions about the lives of the Kit Carson Scouts.

Notes on contributor

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[81] Although I have not been able to find any accounts by Khmer scouts (often referred to as 'Cambodians') explaining their reasons for joining the scouts, their presence is well-documented in contemporary sources: T. Arno, 'S-T-R-E-T-C-H', *American Traveler*, 8 December 1969, 6; W. Ludescher, 'Valuable Kit Carson', *American Traveler*, 2 February 1970, 8; Leighton, 33, 48.

[82] There is evidence of women who served in the PLAF as soldiers (and other positions) and who defected to the South Vietnamese government: 'Hoi Chanh escapes enemy ahead of death sentence', *Old Reliable*, 8 January 1969, 8; 'VC ladies abandon guerilla auxiliary', *Old Reliable*, 24 April 1968, 3.